



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GUATEMALAN MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRING TO TRANSPORT ILLEGAL ALIENS, ILLEGALLY RE-ENTERING U.S.

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a Guatemalan man pleaded guilty in federal court today to conspiring to transport illegal aliens within the United States and to illegally re-entering the United States.

Gelson Omar Mancilla-Santiago, 22, a citizen of Guatemala, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Nanette K. Laughrey this morning to charges contained in an Aug. 5, 2005, federal indictment.

By pleading guilty today, **Mancilla-Santiago** admitted that he participated in a conspiracy to operate a business of transporting illegal aliens in the United States and that he illegally re-entered the United States after having been deported.

Mancilla-Santiago, who had been deported from the United States on Oct. 25, 2004, admitted to his role in the conspiracy to operate a business of transporting illegal aliens from at least as early as May 2005 to June 19, 2005, in Missouri as well as California and Virginia. Conspirators arranged to pick up illegal aliens and transport them from one location to another within the United States, Graves said, charging the illegal aliens a fee for their transportation.

Mancilla-Santiago was contacted by a person to drive a van from Los Angeles, Calif., to New York. On June 18, 2005, the person who contacted **Mancilla-Santiago** provided him with a van and money, and more than 17 illegal aliens were loaded into the van.

On June 19, 2005, the van (carrying more than 17 illegal aliens) crossed the state line into Missouri and was involved in a traffic accident near Columbia, Mo., in which five persons were killed. **Mancilla-Santiago** admitted that he shared in the driving with another person, Graves

said, but **Mancilla-Santiago** claimed that he was not driving the van at the time of the accident.

Graves added that the van had been previously involved in transporting another load of illegal aliens to Virginia.

Under federal statutes, **Mancilla-Santiago** could be subject to a sentence of up to seven years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$500,000. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony P. Gonzalez. It was investigated by the Missouri State Highway Patrol and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow